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A STUDY OF SWADESH DARSHAN SCHEME IN INDIA: STATE-WISE COMPARISON IN FINANCIAL ALLOCATION

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A R T I C L E I N F O.

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Abstract

This paper studies the financial allocation pattern of the Swadesh Darshan Scheme in India through a state-wise comparison based on official Ministry of Tourism data. The study uses secondary data from the state-wise project list under the Swadesh Darshan Scheme and also refers to Swadesh Darshan 2.0, SASCI, and CBDD documents to place the scheme in the broader policy context. The main variables used are number of projects, amount sanctioned, amount released/authorised, and amount utilised. The analysis shows that financial allocation under the Swadesh Darshan Scheme was uneven across states, with Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Kerala, and Rajasthan receiving relatively higher sanctioned amounts, while smaller territories and a few states received much lower allocations. At the aggregate level, the scheme covered 76 projects with ₹5290.33 crore sanctioned, ₹4964.75 crore released/authorised, and ₹4893.91 crore utilised. The findings suggest that the scheme achieved broad geographic coverage, but financial concentration remained visible across selected states.

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Introduction

Tourism has emerged as one of the important sectors of economic and social development in India. It contributes not only to income generation but also to employment creation, regional development, infrastructure expansion, cultural promotion, and improvement in public amenities. In a country like India, where natural landscapes, heritage sites, pilgrimage centres, cultural traditions, wildlife destinations, and coastal regions are spread across different states, tourism has the capacity to support balanced development across regions. Because of this wide developmental role, the tourism sector has increasingly received policy attention from both the Central and State Governments.

However, tourism growth does not depend only on the existence of attractions. It also depends on the availability of proper infrastructure and visitor facilities. In many destinations, the lack of roads, wayside amenities, interpretation centres, signages, sanitation facilities, last-mile connectivity, accommodation support systems, and other tourism infrastructure reduces the full potential of tourism development. Recognising this gap, the Government of India introduced several schemes to strengthen tourism infrastructure and improve destination readiness across the country.

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Among these initiatives, the Swadesh Darshan Scheme occupies an important place. It was launched by the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, with the objective of integrated development of theme-based tourist circuits in the country. The scheme aimed to create quality tourism infrastructure by identifying circuits based on particular themes such as spiritual tourism, heritage tourism, Buddhist tourism, coastal tourism, eco-tourism, desert tourism, tribal tourism, wildlife tourism, and other forms of thematic travel. Instead of treating tourism destinations in isolation, the scheme adopted a circuit-based approach so that a group of connected destinations could be developed together in an integrated manner.

The Swadesh Darshan Scheme was significant because it reflected a planned approach to tourism development. It recognized that tourism infrastructure should not be limited to a single monument or site, but should support the overall experience of the tourist across a wider route or circuit. This approach had the potential to improve accessibility, visitor movement, destination attractiveness, and the quality of tourist services. It also aimed to promote lesser-known destinations, reduce pressure on overburdened tourist centres, and ensure broader geographical spread of tourism benefits.

Another important aspect of the scheme was the role of central financial assistance. Since tourism development often requires substantial investment in infrastructure, many states may face financial limitations in undertaking large-scale projects on their own. Through the Swadesh Darshan Scheme, the Central Government sanctioned funds for various tourism projects in different states and Union Territories. These allocations were made for the development of circuits, destinations, and related amenities. Therefore, the scheme provides a useful basis for studying how financial resources for tourism infrastructure were distributed across the country.

In this context, financial allocation becomes an important area of analysis. A state-wise comparison of allocation helps in understanding whether the scheme distributed funds evenly or whether some states received more support than others. It also helps in examining the relationship between number of projects and amount sanctioned, as well as the extent to which sanctioned funds were released and utilized. Such a comparison is useful not only from a tourism perspective but also from a public policy and regional development perspective. It reflects the pattern of governmental priorities in tourism planning and highlights the relative position of different states within the scheme framework.

The present study focuses specifically on the state-wise financial allocation under the Swadesh Darshan Scheme in India. The study is based on official secondary data provided by the Ministry of Tourism. The main data source is the state-wise list of projects under the Swadesh Darshan Scheme, which contains the number of projects, amount sanctioned, amount released or authorised, and amount utilised for various states and Union Territories. This dataset makes it possible to conduct a comparative financial analysis across states without relying on external assumptions. The official data show that under the scheme, a total of 76 projects were sanctioned, involving ₹5290.33 crore as sanctioned amount, ₹4964.75 crore as released/authorised amount, and ₹4893.91 crore as utilised amount.

Although newer tourism initiatives such as Swadesh Darshan 2.0, SASCI, and CBDD also form part of the broader tourism policy environment, the original Swadesh Darshan Scheme remains particularly useful for state-wise comparison because its official data provide a more direct summary of financial allocation by state. This makes it methodologically suitable for a focused comparative study. It concentrates on the original scheme while taking note of the wider policy context. Tourism-related public expenditure through one of India's major tourism infrastructure schemes. Since financial allocation is a key indicator of policy emphasis, comparing states on the basis of sanctioned, released, and utilised funds helps in identifying disparities, concentration of funding, and implementation trends. Such an analysis can also serve as a base for future research on tourism outcomes, infrastructure effectiveness, and regional development.

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Review of Literature

The literature on the Swadesh Darshan Scheme and related tourism initiatives in India shows that recent tourism development has increasingly moved from isolated site promotion toward planned, scheme-led, circuit-based and destination-oriented development. A broad reading of the available studies suggests that the scheme is discussed not only as a tourism initiative but also as a policy instrument for infrastructure creation, heritage preservation, spiritual tourism promotion, regional connectivity, and local development. At the same time, the literature also reveals that although many studies discuss the design and significance of such schemes, fewer works make a focused comparison of state-wise financial allocation, which is the concern of the present study. A major theme in the literature is government intervention in tourism development. Sengupta, in a chapter titled *Government Intervention and the Future of Tourism in India: Analysis of the Swadesh Darshan Scheme*, presents the Swadesh Darshan Scheme as a significant policy shift in which the government began investing in integrated tourism circuits in order to promote tourism development and generate opportunities for local communities. The chapter shows that the scheme was designed around thematic circuits and that its implementation reflected differential fund allocation across circuits over time. This work is important because it locates Swadesh Darshan within the larger tradition of state-led tourism planning in India and makes clear that tourism infrastructure under the scheme was not accidental, but intentionally structured through public policy **(Sengupta, n.d.).** Another recurring theme in the literature is the role of Swadesh Darshan in spiritual and religious tourism promotion. **Narain and Kumar (2023)** argue that spiritual tourism has become one of the major areas of policy attention in India, and they place Swadesh Darshan alongside related government initiatives aimed at developing religious destinations and circuits. Their discussion points out that Swadesh Darshan 2.0 seeks to create sustainable and responsible tourism destinations, while the broader Swadesh Darshan framework has included infrastructure support for circuits such as Ramayana, Krishna, Buddhist, and Spiritual circuits. This literature is useful because it shows that the scheme is not merely financial in character; it is also embedded in cultural and religious tourism policy. A similar argument is developed by **Malhotra**, who critically examines central government initiatives in temple tourism in India. Her work treats Swadesh Darshan 2.0 as part of a wider effort to promote lesser-known destinations and build a more balanced tourism ecosystem. The study emphasizes that government schemes are being used to support religious and temple tourism through infrastructure, accessibility, and destination development. This contribution extends the discussion beyond simple tourism promotion and suggests that policy-backed tourism development is increasingly tied to the diversification of sacred and heritage destinations **(Malhotra, 2025)**. A third theme in the literature concerns heritage preservation and tourism infrastructure. **Joshi (2025),** in her study on tourism management practices, argues that effective tourism development can contribute positively to both heritage preservation and local community development. Her discussion specifically identifies schemes such as Swadesh Darshan and PRASHAD as evidence of the government's commitment to heritage-oriented tourism infrastructure. According to this work, such initiatives have improved facilities at heritage sites and supported associated services like hospitality, transport, and local crafts, thereby extending benefits to surrounding communities. This is highly relevant to the present research because it suggests that financial allocation under schemes like Swadesh Darshan has implications for both physical infrastructure and wider development outcomes. A related but more recent strand of literature focuses on digital transformation in heritage tourism. **Aditi and Chaturvedi (2025)** examine the role of digital interventions alongside the Swadesh Darshan Scheme in preserving and promoting Uttar Pradesh's cultural and architectural circuits. Their study argues that digital tools such as mobile applications, virtual walkthroughs, GIS mapping, and heritage interpretation systems can enhance visitor engagement, improve accessibility, and support preservation efforts. At the same time, they stress that Swadesh Darshan's physical and interpretive infrastructure forms the base upon which such digital systems can function effectively. Importantly, the authors note that scholarly research remains limited on the complexity, performance, and long-term challenges of these integrated

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interventions, especially with regard to heritage management, destination branding, and visitor interaction. This observation is useful because it points to a wider evaluation gap in the literature **(Aditi & Chaturvedi, 2025).** The literature also places Swadesh Darshan within the broader context of tourism strategy, infrastructure development, and sectoral modernization. **Kolte (2025)**, in a strategic analysis of India's tourism sector, discusses programmes such as Swadesh Darshan 2.0 and PRASHAD as important for infrastructure development and cultural conservation. This perspective is broader than the present study, but it is useful because it reinforces the view that contemporary tourism policy in India is increasingly organized through central schemes that combine infrastructure, accessibility, and destination improvement. Such work helps establish that scheme-based tourism development is central to current policy thinking, although it does not itself provide detailed interstate financial comparison.

Research Methodology

This study is based entirely on secondary data. The main source is the official Ministry of Tourism PDF titled "State wise list of projects under Swadesh Darshan Scheme till 15.07.2025." Supporting context is taken from the official PDFs on Swadesh Darshan 2.0, SASCI, and CBDD.

The study is descriptive and comparative in nature. The following variables are used:

- Number of projects
- Amount sanctioned
- Amount released/authorised
- Amount utilised

Simple comparative tools are used, such as totals, averages, ratios, and ranking of states by sanctioned amount. Derived measures used in interpretation include release rate and utilisation rate. These are calculated as:

- Release Rate = Released / Sanctioned × 100
- Utilisation Rate = Utilised / Sanctioned × 100

Table :1 Top 10 States/UT by Sanctioned Amount under Scheme

Rank	State / UT	No. of Projects	Amount Sanctioned (₹ Cr.)	Amount Released (₹ Cr.)	Amount Utilised (₹ Cr.)	Release Rate	Utilisation Rate
1	J& K and Ladakh	6	519.58	457.10	425.89	88.0	82.0
2	Uttar Pradesh	8	490.95	452.08	437.39	92.1	89.1
3	Madhya Pradesh	4	349.70	342.14	342.14	97.8	97.8
4	Kerala	5	312.47	259.13	238.58	82.9	76.4
5	Rajasthan	4	283.47	265.88	275.45	93.8	97.2
6	Telangana	3	268.39	241.73	262.10	90.1	97.7
7	Bihar	5	262.72	250.37	249.34	95.3	94.9
8	Goa	2	197.00	197.00	195.24	100.0	99.1
9	Nagaland	2	195.50	195.50	190.63	100.0	97.5
10	Sikkim	2	193.37	192.73	192.73	99.7	99.7

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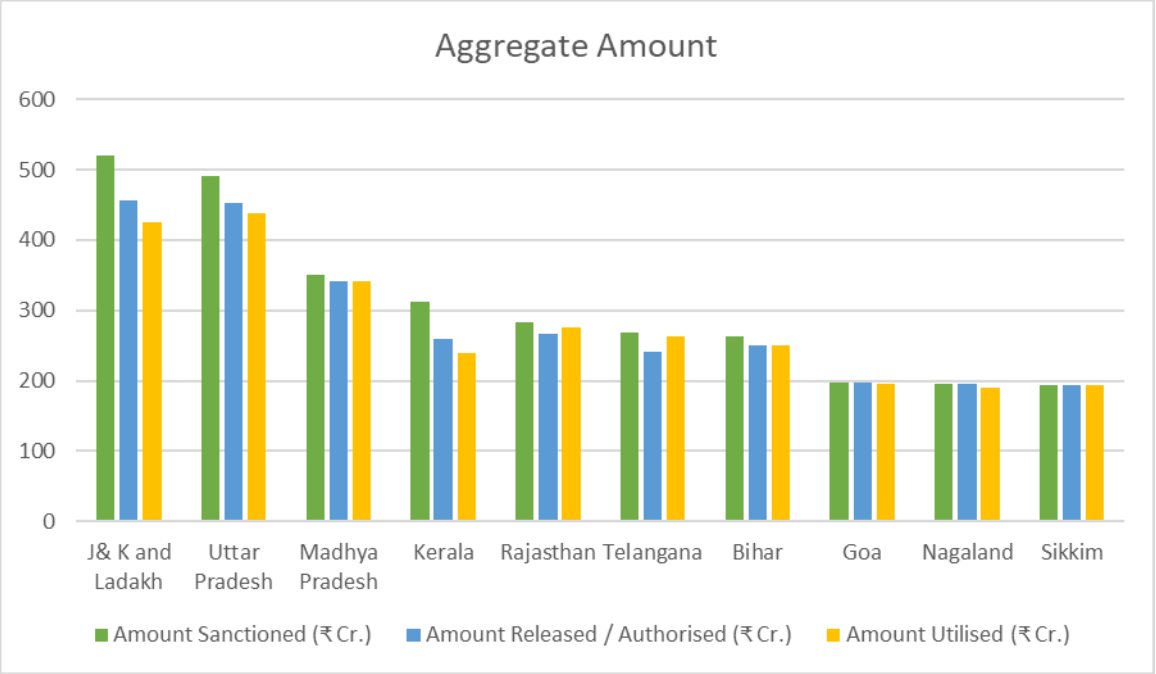

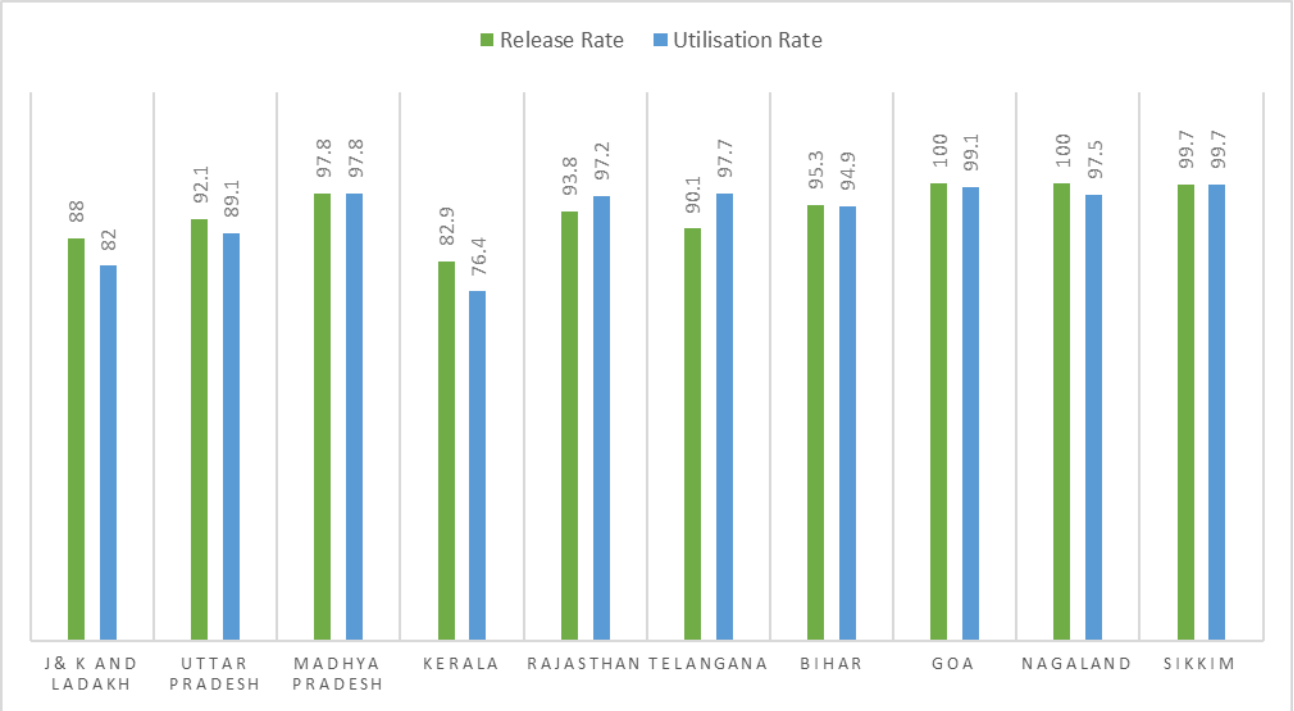

The table shows that financial allocation under the Swadesh Darshan Scheme was concentrated among a few major states and regions. Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh received the highest sanctioned amount of ₹519.58 crore, followed by Uttar Pradesh with ₹490.95 crore and Madhya Pradesh with ₹349.70 crore. This indicates that these areas were given greater priority in the scheme, either because of the number of projects, the scale of tourism circuits, or the strategic importance of the destinations.

In terms of number of projects, Uttar Pradesh ranked first with 8 projects, while Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh had 6 projects. Kerala and Bihar had 5 projects each, and Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan had 4 projects each. This suggests that a higher number of projects often contributed to higher sanction amounts, but this was not always the only factor. For example, Goa, Nagaland, and Sikkim had only 2

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projects each, yet they still received relatively high financial support, which means project size and nature also influenced allocation.

The release rate shows how much of the sanctioned amount was actually released. In this respect, Goa and Nagaland performed best, both with a 100 percent release rate, followed by Sikkim with 99.7 percent and Madhya Pradesh with 97.8 percent. These states show very strong financial progress from sanction to release. On the other hand, Kerala had the lowest release rate at 82.9 percent, followed by Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh at 88.0 percent. This means that compared to the sanctioned amount, a smaller share was actually released in these states.

The utilisation rate reflects how much of the sanctioned amount was ultimately used. Sikkim had the highest utilisation rate at 99.7 percent, followed by Goa at 99.1 percent, Madhya Pradesh at 97.8 percent, Telangana at 97.7 percent, Nagaland at 97.5 percent, and Rajasthan at 97.2 percent. These states show very efficient use of sanctioned funds. In contrast, Kerala had the lowest utilisation rate at 76.4 percent, while Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh had 82.0 percent and Uttar Pradesh had 89.1 percent. This suggests that even though these states received high allocations, their financial utilisation was comparatively lower.

A notable point in the table is that some states with moderate sanctioned amounts showed very strong financial efficiency. For example, Sikkim, Goa, and Nagaland were not the top recipients in absolute amount, but their release and utilisation rates were among the best. This suggests that smaller or medium-sized allocations may sometimes be easier to implement efficiently. On the other hand, states with very large allocations such as Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh, Uttar Pradesh, and Kerala show comparatively lower efficiency, which may reflect the challenges of implementing larger and more complex projects.

Another important observation is that Rajasthan and Telangana have utilisation rates that are very close to full use of the sanctioned amount, despite not being the topmost sanctioned states. This indicates effective financial absorption and implementation. Madhya Pradesh also stands out because both its release rate and utilisation rate are the same at 97.8 percent, showing a very balanced flow of funds from sanction to use.

Conclusion

The present study examined the state-wise pattern of financial allocation under the Swadesh Darshan Scheme in India using official secondary data from the Ministry of Tourism. The analysis shows that the scheme played an important role in supporting tourism infrastructure across a wide geographical area, but the distribution of funds was not uniform across states and Union Territories. A few states, particularly Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Kerala, and Rajasthan, received relatively larger sanctioned amounts, while many other states and territories received much smaller allocations. This clearly indicates that the scheme followed a pattern of financial concentration rather than equal distribution.

The study also finds that higher financial allocation did not always mean higher financial efficiency. States such as Goa, Nagaland, Sikkim, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Telangana showed very strong release and utilisation performance, whereas some of the largest fund recipients, including Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh, Uttar Pradesh, and Kerala, showed comparatively lower release or utilisation rates in relation to their sanctioned amount. This suggests that implementation efficiency varies across states and that the size of allocation alone is not enough to judge scheme performance.

Another important finding of the study is that the Swadesh Darshan Scheme succeeded in creating a broad framework for theme-based tourism circuit development, linking financial support with infrastructure creation, visitor facilities, and destination development. Literature on the scheme and related initiatives also supports the view that Swadesh Darshan contributed to tourism planning,

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heritage promotion, spiritual tourism, and regional destination development, although more direct empirical research on allocation and outcomes remains limited.

Thus, the paper concludes that the Swadesh Darshan Scheme was a significant public policy initiative in Indian tourism, but its financial allocation pattern reveals visible inter-state disparities. The study therefore contributes by showing that a state-wise comparison of sanctioned, released, and utilised funds provides a clearer picture of the practical spread of tourism investment under the scheme. At the same time, the study remains limited to financial comparison and does not measure the scheme's effect on tourist arrivals, employment, or regional income. These areas may be explored in future research using additional datasets.

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